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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [PINS](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [EFIN](#) [MASS](#) [CF](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: BRAZZAVILLE IN BRIEF - MARCH 12, 2009

BUYING GUNS IN THE POOL

¶1. In an operation running through March 2, the Congolese government bought a total of over 2,500 firearms, 66,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, and several hundred grenades, rockets, and artillery shells from the Pool area. The operation was financed with a 500 million CFA Congo government budget allocation and was carried out by a special committee set up in the peace accords of 2003. The government opened seventeen centers for the purchase of arms, paying as much as 100,000 FCA (around \$200) for each AK-47 (known locally as "PMAK"). According to the press, the National Council of Republicans (CNR) political party, headed by Frederic Bintsamou (Pasteur Ntoumi), and the "Ninjas," the last militia remaining from the civil wars of 1998-2003, cooperated in encouraging Ninja militants to participate in the buyback. This program is linked to the National Program of Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration (PNDDR), which has through 2008 been funded by the World Bank and the EU. However, due to delays in implementation, the funding from both sources is lapsing this year, just as the hardest nut (the Pool) has begun to crack. Thus funding is sorely needed to subsidize the continuing exit of Pool combatants "from the bush," a flow that is particularly urgent in light of the impending Presidential election in July of this year. The head of the program and colleagues are traveling in an effort to raise urgent, fast disbursing funding from external donors. They are in Washington this week for a meeting of the World Bank multilateral disarmament and reintegration program and will be visiting Belgium, Germany, and France in the coming weeks.

MINISTERS MEET ON GULF OF GUINEA SECURITY

¶2. During the last week of February, Brazzaville hosted a Council of Ministers meeting of the Peace and security Council of Central Africa (COPAX). According to the communique issued after the meeting, the ministers urged their colleagues to implement fully the program to eliminate light/small caliber weapons. Agreeing with a working group recommendation, they urged rapid action to set up the regional logistics center at Douala, approved the recommendations of the planning work for exercise "KWANZA 2010" to be held in Angola in 2010, stating an expectation that the African Union could certify the Central African brigade of the African standby force during the exercise. The press reported that the meeting was attended by Angola, Cameroon, Congo(B), Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, DRC, Central African Republic, Sao Tome and Principe, and Chad, as well as the secretary general of CEEAC, Louis Sylvain Goma.

ITALY FORGIVES DEBT

¶3. The Italian Ambassador and the Congolese Minister of finance and budget signed a Paris Club debt forgiveness agreement on March 7. The accord forgives all of Congo's official debt to Italy, in the amount of 36 billion FCA (around \$70 million).

~AND CHINA LOANS MORE

¶4. On the same day, March 7, Congo(B) President Denis Sassou Nguesso laid the first stone of a new water treatment plant at Ndjiri north of Brazzaville. The plant is intended to treat and pump water for the city of Brazzaville. It will cost 130.5 billion FCA (\$250 million), and is being financed by a Chinese government loan, under the overall Chinese credit program. The construction contract is in the hands of China National Machinery and Equipment Import. Terms of the loan were not announced.

EASTHAM